

## Message Text

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ACTION PM-03

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 EB-07 OMB-01

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P 061423Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6049

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

USMISSION NATO PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 2883

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, NL

SUBJECT: PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON F-16

1. GENERALLY LACKLUSTER DEBATE ON GON'S DECISION TO ORDER 84 F-16'S WITH OPTION FOR 18 MORE IF FOUR-NATION CONSORTIUM STICKS TOGETHER DRONED ON LATE INTO NIGHT JUNE 5. WITH INCREASING EXPECTATION HERE THAT BELGIUM WILL FINALLY DECIDE FOR F-16 ON JUNE 7 AND WITH STRAINS SHOWING IN DUTCH LABOR PARTY, DEBATE WAS GENERALLY MUTED. SEVERAL MOTIONS INTRODUCED DURING COURSE OF DEBATE WILL BE VOTED ON DURING WRAP-UP SESSION JUNE 10.

2. LABOR PARTY (PVDA) IN SECOND CHAMBER, WHICH HAS BEEN ON RECORD FOR MONTHS IN OPPOSITION TO DEFMIN VREDELING'S POSITION ON F-104 REPLACEMENT QUESTION, RESTATED ITS OBJECTIONS TO F-16, BUT IN MANNER DESIGNED TO AVOID CONFRONTATION WHICH WOULD FORCE DEFMIN TO RESIGN AND PRECIPITATE POSSIBLE CABINET CRISIS. PVDA SPOKESMAN, DANKERT, SAID CHOICE WAS NOT BETWEEN AIRPLANE A OR B, BUT WAS ON FUTURE OF DUTCH DEFENSE FORCES. CHOICE OF F-16 DID NOT MEET PVDA'S FINANCIAL AND SPECIALIZATION REQUIREMENTS; IT WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO ARMS RACE; IT LIKELY CONFIDENTIAL

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BE OBSOLETE BY TIME IT INTRODUCED THROUGH DEVELOPMENT OF SOPHISTICATED DEFENSE SYSTEMS (LASERS); AND PROGRAM COSTS WERE SO UNRELIABLE AS TO THREATEN OTHER DUTCH DEFENSE PROGRAMS.

3. MOTION SUBMITTED BY LABOR PARTY REPRESENTS SIGNIFICANT PULLBACK FROM PUBLIC POSITIONS ESPOUSED BY CHAMBER MEMBERS. CAREFULLY DRAFTED TO HOLD PARLIAMENTARY GROUP TOGETHER, MOTION REQUESTS GOVERNMENT TO RECONSIDER DECISION AND TO PURSUE SPECIALIZATION WITHIN ALLIANCE. IF ALLIANCE NOT PREPARED TO SERIOUSLY TAKE STEPS LEADING TO SPECIALIZATION, MOTION INVITES GON TO REDUCE TASKS OF RNLAf. WHILE MOTION UNACCEPTABLE TO DEFMIN, IT NOT CONSIDERED BE DIRECT PERSONAL ATTACK WHICH WOULD FORCE HIM FOLLOW THROUGH ON EARLIER THREAT TO RESIGN. IT ALMOST CERTAIN THAT MOTION WILL NOT BE ADOPTED.

4. CENTER (CONFESSIONALS) AND RIGHT WING PARTIES SUPPORTED GON DECISION TO BUY F-16'S. CATHOLIC SPOKESMAN VAN ELSSEN, CHAIRMAN OF DEFENSE COMMITTEE, PRAISED VREDELING FOR HIS PERFORMANCE IN SELECTION PROCESS. VAN ELSSEN SAID THAT IT WAS NOW TIME, HOWEVER, FOR U.S. TO MAKE MILITARY PROCUREMENT A GENUINE TWO-WAY STREET BY BEGINNING GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO EUROPEAN BUYS. HE WONDERED IF USG MIGHT BE PREPARED MAKE SOME LIMITED USE OF FOKKER F-28, REFERRING PARTICULARLY TO US COAST GUARD. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF DURING DINNER BREAK IN PROCEEDINGS, VAN ELSSEN SAID IT NOT SO IMPORTANT TO HIM THAT US ACTUALLY PURCHASE F-28, BUT THAT IT SERIOUSLY STUDY QUESTION AND EVALUATE PLANE IN LIGHT OF U.S. REQUIREMENTS. HE THOUGHT THAT CONSIDERATION OF F-28 WOULD BE HELPFUL TO DUTCH POLITICIANS WHO, "LIKE THOSE IN US, MUST BE RESPONSIVE TO INDUSTRY AND PUBLIC."

5. LIBERAL (VVD) SPOKESMAN, PLOEG, TABLED MOTION CALLING ON GON TO DECIDE NOW TO BUY 102 F-16'S RATHER THAN PURCHASE 84 WITH OPTION FOR ANOTHER 18. ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY PARTY, WHILE NOT ENDORSING MOTION, ALSO SOUGHT ASSURANCES THAT 102 AIRPLANES WOULD BE BOUGHT. DEFMIN, WHO FACED WITH DELICATE BALANCING BETWEEN LEFT AND RIGHT, EVADED ANSWERING, ONLY GIVING ASSURANCES THAT GON TAKING CONFIDENTIAL

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FIRM OPTION ON 18. VAN ELSSEN SAID HE SATISFIED THAT MINISTER WOULD NOT SETTLE FOR SMALLER NUMBER AND THOUGHT MOTION WAS SUPERFLUOUS. LATER TOLD EMBOFF IN CONFIDENCE THAT HIS PARTY WOULD PROBABLY VOTE AGAINST ALL MOTIONS, AND THAT WITHOUT SUPPORT OF HIS PARTY NONE SHOULD PASS.

6. IT CLEAR DURING NIGHT THAT MOST MEMBERS RESIGNED TO GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS OF DEBATE. COMMUNISTS TAUNTED RADICALS FOR NOT RIGHTING IN GOVERNMENT AGAINST F-16, LIBERALS BAITED LABOR AND RADICALS AND OFFERED JOIN WITH THEM IN BRINGING DOWN GOVERNMENT, LABOR UNCOMFORTABLY COMPROMISED TO SAVE THEIR GOVERNMENT, AND CONFESSIONALS SOUGHT GET THROUGH DAY WITH DECISION AND

GOVERNMENT INTACT. DEFMIN, WHO IS ONCE AGAIN IN NEWS  
FOR HIS UNCONVENTIONAL BEHAVIOR, COMMENTED RATHER  
INFREQUENTLY DURING GENERAL DEBATE. HE RAPIDLY READ  
HIS REPLIES TO QUESTIONS RAISED IN DEBATE DURING LATE  
NIGHT SESSION AND WAS SELDOM INTERRUPTED DURING THREE-  
HOUR MONOLOGUE AS HE EMPHACIZED THAT DECISION ON F-16  
WAS NOT HIS ALONE, BUT THAT OF ENTIRE CABINET WHICH HAD  
SELECTED BEST AIRPLANE WITH BEST CO-PRODUCTION PACKAGE  
AND AT LOWEST PRICE.

TANGUY

CONFIDENTIAL

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